

**DRAFT**

# **Delta Stewardship Council Public Outreach and Engagement Plan**

**Version: September 13, 2010**

## Introduction

California law mandates that the Delta Stewardship Council develop a Delta Plan by January 2012 to further two coequal goals:

“Coequal goals means the two goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.” (California Water Code Section 85054)

The intent of this Public Outreach and Engagement Plan is to create broad-based, statewide awareness of, and participation in, the development and implementation of the Delta Plan. To that end, the Council commits to:

1. Act in an open and transparent manner in the development and implementation of the Delta Plan
2. Provide information pertinent to the development of the Delta Plan to enhance people’s ability to understand issues and engage with the Council
3. Listen to and learn from interested individuals and those who may potentially be affected by the Delta Plan by creating opportunities for input and dialog to assist the Council’s decisionmaking

This commitment supports the Council’s legislative mandate to develop a plan that serves the multiple, sometimes competing, interests of California as a whole – its people, its ecosystems, and its wildlife.

The Council’s Public Outreach and Engagement Plan is intended as a working document that will evolve as the Council proceeds with its work, as the public’s interests in engaging with the Council become clearer, and as experience with engagement opportunities informs and improves the Council’s best outreach and engagement tools and approaches. Specific engagement opportunities will be developed and publicized.

This Public Outreach and Engagement Plan was developed, in part, from input received at the meeting of the Communications Workgroup on August 12, 2010<sup>1</sup> attended by approximately 25 members of the public, from written comments, and from input obtained through an online survey conducted in August and September 2010. The Council appreciates these observations and recommendations, and believes this Plan reflects its commitment to dialog and participation.

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<sup>1</sup> This document is not intended to describe the Council’s approach to engaging and establishing working relationships with agencies, as these are addressed in the Act and in the Interim Plan. This is not intended to prevent agency representatives from participating in opportunities identified for public engagement.

## Overview

The Delta Reform Act, SBX7 1, establishes the Delta Stewardship Council and charges it “to develop, adopt, and commence implementation of the Delta Plan...”no later than January 1, 2012. The Act also directs the Council to develop an Interim Plan that includes recommendations for early actions, projects and programs. In its Interim Plan (adopted in August 2010), the Council has committed to a process that includes procedures “to ensure transparency and adequate opportunities for interested parties and the public to participate in decision making, including availability of information related to a decision well before the meeting at which it is considered.” (Interim Plan, p. iv) The Interim Plan also states that:

“The Council seeks strong working relationships with agencies and stakeholders. The relationships developed as the Delta Plan is written and in working through issues under the Interim Plan should be important to the long term relationships of the Council, other agencies, stakeholders and the public. The Council’s goal is to develop an effective Delta Plan that can also serve as many of the missions and goals of other agencies as is possible within SBX7 1. Important components of those effective working relationships are procedures that ensure transparency and robust procedures for early consultation that are used consistently.

Finally, implementation requires full consideration of public input. Opportunities should be provided for the public to engage in the development and implementation of the Interim Plan.” (p. 31)

The Council’s approach to Outreach and Public Engagement is designed to provide opportunities for engagement to those who have the willingness and ability to be actively and directly engaged in providing input into the development of the Delta Plan. It also provides different levels and opportunities for engagement to accommodate stakeholders and members of the public with varying ability and interests in active participation. The approach to input and dialog will be consistent with the Council’s statutory roles, including its regulatory obligations.

## Public Outreach and Engagement Goal and Objectives

**Goal.** The Council’s goal for public outreach and engagement is to draft a Delta Plan that benefits from sound information and understanding of public interests. The information provided *by* the Council will provide for better-informed stakeholders and publics. Information and data provided *to* the Council will assist the Council’s appreciation and consideration of a wide range of needs, concerns, interests, opinions, and preferences. Both will shape the development of a Delta Plan that will serve as a comprehensive and coordinated system to support the coequal goals of “providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.”

**Objectives.** To achieve this broad goal the approach to public engagement is designed around the following five objectives:

1. *Make available to the public useful, understandable information about the Act, the Interim Plan, and the Delta Plan*
2. *Inform the public in a timely manner about engagement opportunities prior to Council decisions and actions*
3. *Promote a dialog with the public to ensure the Council fully understands the wide range of interests potentially affected by Council decisions and actions, receives all relevant information, and considers a wide range of potential options and solutions for achieving the coequal goals*
4. *Promote inclusion of interests, information and ideas by balancing the use of in-person activities that provide direct contact but may limit participation with technology-based activities that potentially expand the number of people who can participate but provide less opportunity for direct interaction*
5. *Track public input gathered through the engagement process, acknowledge receipt of input to the extent practical, make it available where feasible, and explain to the public how input shapes decision making and actions*

Additional objectives for outreach and engagement for the environmental review process are to:

- *Provide opportunities for formal comment through the scoping process and release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), and*
- *Ensure the letter and spirit of the California Environmental Quality Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and any other applicable environmental laws are followed with respect to disclosure and opportunities to comment*

## Public Outreach and Engagement Timing

Public outreach and engagement will occur in four contexts and timeframes, with some overlap:

- Interim Plan (May-August 2010; Interim Plan adopted August 27, 2010)
- Delta Plan Development (August 2010-December 2011)
- Environmental Review (September 2010-December 2011)
- Delta Plan Implementation (January 2012 forward)

Specific environmental review milestones, for which there will be opportunities for public input and review, include:

- Delta Plan Project Description (Council Approval) November 2010

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| • Scoping Meetings  | January 2011          |
| • Public Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Draft Delta Plan | June 2011             |
| • Public Review of EIR  | June 2011-August 2011 |
| • Draft Final EIR   | November 2011         |
| • Final EIR, Notice of Decision (NOD), and Final Delta Plan           | December 2011         |

## Public Outreach Approach

The Council will keep the public informed about the development and eventual implementation of the Delta Plan in the following ways.

### Website

The Council website will serve as a central hub for information on the Delta Stewardship Council. It will maintain a repository of previous Delta research, background information and documents, as well as highlight the Council's most recent activities and decisions. Additionally, it may include the following:

- Brief videos that convey major Delta problems, background about how the Delta Stewardship Council was created, and how previous research/planning documents relate to the current process
- An interactive Delta map to explain how water flows to and through the Delta
- A section to support the concept of "Delta as an evolving place" with photos, case studies and information
- A brief online survey to encourage feedback
- A "submit comments" feature
- Links to the Council's social media sites (i.e., Facebook and Twitter)
- An RSS news feed

### Newsletter and email updates

A bi-monthly newsletter began distribution in August 2010. Its focus is on Delta Plan progress, key milestones, scheduled events, and opportunities for input and engagement. It will be distributed electronically to the Delta Plan listserv and posted on the Council's website. Additionally, the Council will issue email updates as needed to inform listserv members of timely information, events and opportunities.

## **Brochure**

A printed brochure will provide a general orientation of the challenges in the Delta, the Council's legislative mission and mandate, the process of developing the Delta Plan, and a general overview of alternatives to achieve the Plan's goals.

## **Council speaking engagements**

As time permits, Council members and/or staff will speak to organizations whose members seek to understand the Delta Stewardship Council's mission, mandate, authority and approach to developing a plan that will guide water and land use in the Delta.

## **Media relations**

The Council will be responsive to media inquiries and will initiate media contact as appropriate. The Council commits to publicizing all key milestones and decisions. Council members and staff will serve as spokespersons and the Council's Public Information Officer will assist media.

# **Public Engagement Approach**

The Council will engage in dialog with stakeholders and the broader public about Delta issues as well as the development and implementation of the Delta Plan using methods such as those described below.

## **Document review, comments, and response**

Draft documents for which there is the opportunity for public review will be posted on the Council's website and comments will be invited. Comments can be submitted online, via email, or by mail and will be assembled in way that is meaningful for Council consideration. To the extent possible relative to volume and Council resources, the Council will acknowledge receipt of comments and may, where feasible, provide an indication of how the information was considered and utilized.

## **Public comment at Council meetings**

At each monthly Council meeting, the public will be invited to share ideas, interests and information that will be considered by the Council in the development and implementation of the Delta Plan.

## **Workgroups and reports to Council**

The Council approved establishment of four public workgroups at its May 2010 meeting for the purpose of identifying information, issues, concerns and suggestions for consideration by the Council. The four workgroups are:

- Risk Reduction and Coequal Goals [met on July 8, 2010 in Sacramento]
- Governance and Implementation [met on August 3, 2010 in Sacramento]
- Communications [met on August 12, 2010 in Sacramento]

- Reduced Reliance on the Delta [tentative meeting in October 2010]

Each workgroup session generates a written summary that is provided to the Council and posted on the website. The Council also receives a briefing at each meeting on workgroup activity and outcomes.

Additional workgroup meetings may be held and additional workgroups may be formed once topics and specific needs for input are identified.

### **Web-based seminars and briefings**

Web-based technology allows opportunities for broad public participation without having to attend meetings in person. The Council expects to sponsor one or more web-based seminars or briefings as part of its public engagement activities. These opportunities could cover a wide range of topics, including key science issues. Information about participation will be posted on the Council website and will be communicated through the listserv. These briefings will have an interactive component to allow questions and input based on a specific presentation.

### **Public briefings and technical workshops**

To supplement engagement at formal milestones associated with scientific studies and the environmental review process the Council will sponsor periodic “in-person” public briefings and technical workshops. The purpose of these events will be to (1) gather input, ideas, and information from individual participants for use in development of the Delta Plan and EIR, and (2) provide public updates as to progress, findings and future plans.

In addition, updates will be provided on the environmental review process associated with the EIR, including status updates on the process and a review of the alternatives report when it is available. Advance notice of briefings and technical workshops will be provided on the Council website along with workshop agendas, meeting materials and session summaries, if applicable. Briefings and workshops may also be organized for specific organizations the Council seeks to engage.

### **Briefings and information for interested stakeholders**

In-person briefings will be organized for environmental/conservation interests, landowners, regional farm organizations, government associations, planning organizations, civic organizations, recreational groups, chambers of commerce or business groups and others. Where possible these briefings will be scheduled in conjunction with regular meetings or events. Information presented at briefings will also be posted on the website, including, as applicable, a summary of topics discussed during the briefing.

### **Environmental review**

The California Environmental Quality Act and National Environmental Policy Act provide for specific solicitation of public input for the identification of topics and issues to study in the environmental review process as well for providing input on various alternatives of the Plan. These activities will include: public scoping meetings and a scoping report; formal public meetings around release of the draft environmental documents; public review and comment on the draft environmental documents; and public release of the final environmental documents.

## Consultation and coordination with the Council

The authority of the Delta Plan regarding water and land use in the Delta is significant. As such, the Council will communicate, coordinate and engage with a number of organizations and entities. For example:

- **Federal agencies:** The Interim Plan sets out procedures for the Council to engage federal agencies and for early consultation around potential covered actions consistent with the Act. The Council will identify and consult with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, whose jurisdiction and responsibilities overlap with the Council's mandate.
- **Tribes:** The Council will identify Native American tribes who have indirect and/or direct interest in the land, water and fish in the Delta. On a government-to-government basis, the Council will engage in regional tribal consultations to understand and consider the tribes' interests in the development and implementation of the Delta Plan. It may undertake other activities as needed.
- **State, regional and local governments and agencies:** The Delta Plan's legal authority over land use and water supply throughout California requires close communication and coordination with, as well as input from, numerous government entities. The Council will establish venues for information exchange and will respond to requests for meetings and/or information with these agencies.